

## What does the Bible teach us about body piercing and tattooing?

### Intro:

➤ → **body piercing and tattooing are important, yet volatile issues in today's society**

- I've received several questions from young people on this issue

→ **This lesson:**

- **Title:** What does the Bible say about body piercing and tattooing?
- **Purpose:**
  - Rom. 3:23 — not in embarrass anyone who may have participated in these behaviors in the past
    - all men may repent and be saved
  - to instruct the young, from God's word, in this pop cultural behavior involving a lot of peer pressure

➤ #1 Old Testament — learn from it

→ nose rings and earrings were permitted

- **Gen. 24:47** (Abraham's servant selecting Rachel as Isaac's bride) "Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him'; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.
- ● **Ex. 32:2** (gold for the golden calf) Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."
- ● **Ex. 35:22** (gifts to build the tabernacle) Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD.
- ● **Deut. 15:16-17** (law, Hebrew slave who doesn't want to leave after 7 years) "It shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant.
- **OT: tasteful adornments, earrings and nose rings were permitted by God**

➤ → tattooing was not permitted

- **Lev. 19:28** 'You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the LORD.
- **OT: tattooing and marking the body (cuts, burns, scars) has its roots in paganism, God's children were not permitted to participate in this behavior — demonism, Baal worship, shamanism, mysticism, heathenism, cannibalism, etc**
- **today:** many tattoos are Satanic and reek of paganism, even the cross tattoos have pagan and Satanic roots
  - for the first time in history, tattoos have been accepted by some people who profess to believe the Bible - they believe it is worshipful rather than sinful

→ Must go to the New Testament to learn what God would have us do today

- **Rom. 15:4** Old Testament is for our learning
- **Gal. 6:2** we live under the law of Christ today

→ Application:

- God approved of godly nose and ear piercing in the Old Testament, but not tattooing

## #2 Bible principles we must use to determine whether body piercing and tattooing is lawful or unlawful

→ Many behaviors we must deal with are not specifically mentioned in the Bible — must apply principles

- we must go to the Bible and apply the principles God has set forth to determine whether these behaviors are godly or ungodly
- e.g., dancing, pornography, gambling, etc.

→ Four applicable principles:

- ● **We are to glorify God in our bodies.**
  - **1 Cor. 6:19-20** your body is the Lord's temple
  - **Phil. 1:20** you must exalt Christ in your body
  - **1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 2 Pet. 3:11** your outward appearance is to profess godliness (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:12; cf. 1 Cor. 11:1ff)
  - **application:** only do the things that bring glory to God
  - **illus.:** other people look at you and assume you are a Christian
    - not on the cutting edge of pop culture
- ● **We are to only do things that are honorable and respectable in the sight of men.**
  - **Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8** only do the things that men (society) consider respectable — obeying God in everything we do (Acts 4:19; 5:29)
  - **illus.:** boys wearing their pants around the bottom of their rear ends
  - **illus.:** girls dressing like pop stars, wearing short shirts, showing their midriffs, with belly rings
- ● **We shouldn't engage in lustful and licentious (sensual) behaviors.**
  - "Lust" is a strong desire to sin.
    - **Rom. 6:12** not obey sin in its lust
    - **1 Jn. 2:16** For all that is in the world, the **lust** of the flesh, and the **lust** of the eyes, and the pride of life, is **not of the Father, but is of the world.**
  - "Licentious" is unbridled lust — excess, absence of restraint, indecency, and wantonness. The Greek is often translated *sensual* in the NASB.
    - **2 Cor. 12:20-21** not participate: sensuality (NASB), lewdness (NKJ), lasciviousness (KJ)
    - **Jude 1:4** evil men turn the grace of God into licentiousness — do what feels good gospel
- ● **We shouldn't engage in questionable behaviors.**
  - **Rom. 14:23** must be absolutely positive a behavior is lawful before engaging in it
  - **1 Th. 5:21-22** abstain from every form of evil - not participate in things that even have the appearance of sin - not get in the grey areas
    - **illus.:** teenage night clubs, everything that goes on in regular clubs except drinking
  - **Application:** We must be absolutely positive that body piercing and tattooing are lawful, before engaging in these behaviors.

→ What's this mean to you? — Application:

- review the 4 principles above
- must be careful, thoughtful, prayerful, before engaging in behaviors that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible

➤ #3 Application of the principles:

➔ Body piercing:

● Discrete body piercings:

- Discrete body piercing, such as tasteful female ear piercing, is considered in society to be a godly adornment. The piercing itself is **not associated with evil**.
- As long as the earrings do not represent or communicate something sinful, pierced ears, and discrete nose piercings in some cultures, profess godliness and do not bring reproach upon God. Therefore, tastefully pierced ears are authorized in God's word.

➤ ● Wanton (licentious) body piercings:

- A broad section of society believes that body piercings (other than discrete ear and nose piercings) reflects a licentious and riotous lifestyle. — pop culture stars, piercings and tattoos
- These piercings were popularized in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by people in pop culture known for sinful lifestyles.
- Because of the sinful connotations associated with these piercings, this behavior is questionable at best (Rom. 14:23). Therefore, God's children should abstain from these piercings since:
  - They do not glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
  - They do not exalt Christ (Phil. 1:20).
  - They do not profess godliness (1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 4:7-8; 6:11).
  - They are not honorable and respectable in the sight of men (Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8).
  - Many are licentious, symbolic of a riotous lifestyle (2 Cor. 12:20-21).

➤ ➔ Tattooing:

- Tattoos were popular in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century among military personnel, and others, commonly reflecting a carousing lifestyle. Later, gang members, rappers, and other celebrities began embracing tattooing as a sign of a licentious lifestyle. Because of the sinful connotations associated with tattooing, Christians should also abstain from this behavior, which is questionable at best (Rom. 14:23).
  - They do not glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
  - They do not exalt Christ (Phil. 1:20).
  - They do not profess godliness (1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 4:7-8; 6:11).
  - They are not honorable and respectable in the sight of men (Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8).
  - Many are licentious, symbolic of a riotous lifestyle (2 Cor. 12:20-21).
  - **illus.:** I wanted to use pics on the PowerPoint for the lesson, but I didn't think they were appropriate
    - many of the pics would have been inappropriate, even if there wasn't a tattoo on the body

➤ → Questions (FAQs):

● **Is a cross tattoo godly?**

- many young people have written me, **believing cross tattoos are okay, emblematic of Christ**
- cross tattoo has its **roots in paganism, before the time of Christ**
  - **it reflects the enemies of Christ**
- many cross tattoos are **representative of pagan religions**, others have been created to represent Christ and His cross
- **the meaning behind the cross tattoo is often skewed**, unknown to anyone but the wearer
- **at best**, wearing a cross tattoos is a questionable behavior that Christians should avoid (Rom. 14:23)
  - **illus.: In the time I spent researching cross tattoos**, seeing some of the demonic ones and some models advertising the tattoos, it's not something that's profitable for God's children.

➤ ● **What if my tattoo is somewhere people can't see?**

- **seen by** the person who put it there
- **seen by** everyone who knows the wearer very well
- **most of all, it's seen by** the person who wears it on their body
- **no matter where it is on the body and who sees it, the message is the same** - seen or not seen in public
- **at best**, wearing a cross tattoos is a questionable behavior that Christians should avoid (Rom. 14:23)

➤ ● **What about fake (pretend) piercings and tattoos?**

- fake piercings and tattoos, often **associated with children**
- near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these **toys** were included in candy or bought very inexpensively
  - They often reflect cartoon characters.
- temporary tattoos have **grown in popularity** and sophistication
  - now being worn by **adults**
- whether a temporary tattoo is lawful or unlawful, is **determined by applying the principles discussed**
  - **illus.:** a temporary tattoo of a high school team's mascot worn at a game on Friday evening and removed before assembling with the saints on Sunday, professes godliness
  - **illus.:** a temporary tattoo of a woman in a bikini or a muscleman, does not profess godliness and dishonors God because of the licentious message
- **advise: make sure not questionable, be true to conscience**

→ **Conclusion: At Best, Body Piercing and Tattooing are Questionable Behaviors - unless toys for kids**

- **Someone may say that culture and society have changed**, arguing that body piercing and tattooing do not have the riotous and rebellious connotations they had a few years ago.
- It is true that society changes and that styles (such as women wearing pants) change.
  - **A hundred years from now**, the rebellious and licentious lifestyles associated with the people popularizing body piercing and tattoos may no longer be associated with these behaviors.
- **But for now**, the message a person sends to others when tattooing and piercing his body is a questionable message of godliness. A pierced or tattooed body, still associates the person with the licentious pop culture that continues to make these behaviors popular in our society.
  - **Therefore**, body piercing (except for discreet piercings) and tattooing are, **at best, questionable** behaviors — e.g., many questions I've received
- **Conclusion:** Since Christians are not permitted to engage in questionable behaviors, and since body piercing (except for discreet piercings) and tattooing are religiously questioned by many in our society, we must conclude that body piercing and tattooing should be avoided by Christians (Rom. 14:23).

➤ **Don't do something you'll regret when you grow old** — practical advice to young people

→ Practical advice

- **Disease often results from tattoos and body piercings:**
  - **Deadly blood-born diseases** can result from tattooing and body piercing (HIV that causes AIDS, hepatitis, tetanus, tuberculosis, etc.).
  - **A study by Dr. Bob Haley and Dr. Paul Fischer** found that commercially acquired tattoos accounted for more than twice as many hepatitis C infections as injection-drug use. And that people who get tattooed in a commercial tattoo parlor were nine times more likely to get hepatitis C, than someone who is not tattooed.— **tattoo illness greater from tattoos than drug abuse**
    - **illus.:** Christian with young family, lives in FL, got a tattoo when young and became a Christian later in life, has hepatitis, needs a liver transplant but probably won't get one
    - **probably because of polluted needle or ink**
  
- **Tattoos:**
  - **Talk to some elderly people** who have had tattoos since they were young. **Carefully look at the tattoo** and notice that it is **faded** and does **not look as good as a new tattoo**. Try to **imagine a tattoo on you, when you are old**. How would it **look when it's faded and your skin is stretched** and worn.
  - **Ask the elderly person**, "If you were young again, and you were thinking about getting a tattoo, would you do it?" Many will tell you "No." Some will even tell you that they wish their tattoo could be taken off.
  
- **Body Piercings:**
  - Body piercing is a rather new behavior in the developed world, so I doubt you can talk to elderly people who have had pierced body parts for fifty years. But, you can **look at pictures of people in third world nations** who have practiced body piercing for generations. In the pictures, look at the old **people's stretched and worn skin** and notice that the **piercings are disfigured**, as a result of their skin becoming old and saggy. **Imagine what your pierced body would look like in your elderly years**, when your skin is stretched and sagging from childbirth or loss of muscle tone. Ask yourself, "How will I look with loose and sagging body piercings when I'm eighty years old?"
  
- **Body Piercings and Tattoos are Permanent:**
  - Before making a permanent change to your body, **be sure it's something you want to live with forever**.
  - **Look at pictures of your parents and grandparents** when they were your age. Their **hair and clothes styles were much different** when they were young.
    - **How would your parents feel if they had to wear the same styles today**, which they wore twenty or thirty years ago? This is the way you may **feel when body piercing and tattooing go out of style**.
    - **Much of the time, tattoos and body piercings are permanent**.

- **Doctors Say Tattoo Removal Is Becoming More Common:**

- **On November 30, 2003**, a story by **Michael Hill** was published by The Times-Enterprise in Thomasville, Georgia. The title of this article is, *Doctors Say Tattoo Removal Is Becoming More Common*. This article reveals that **more and more people who have tattoos, are deciding to have them removed**. Below are three quotes from the article, which everyone should read before getting a tattoo:

- **At 23, Alexandra Baker figures it's time to get rid of the spider on her ankle.** The tattoo was inked on in college — one of seven on her body. But Baker's outlook has changed somewhat. The spider is something to hide rather than exhibit. So it's coming off, along with two little fairies on her chest. **"I can't stand having them anymore,"** said Baker, who lives in New York's Hudson Valley. **"It's just not how I want to portray myself anymore."** (Times-Enterprise, 11-20-2003, Albany, NY, Associated Press)

- “There are a number of people who did this and have said ‘Geez, this is not what I want.’ **What seems really great at age 17 or 20 may not seem so great at age 30,**” said Dr. Brian Kinney, a Los Angeles **plastic surgeon** and spokesman for the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (Times-Enterprise, 11-20-2003, Albany, NY, Associated Press)

- **Professionals — from artists who create tattoos to doctors who remove them — say the best strategy is not to get ill-considered tattoos in the first place.** Their advice: Think. Will you enjoy having your fraternity letters on your backside in a decade? (Times-Enterprise, 11-20-2003, Albany, NY, Associated Press)

- This article emphasizes that health **care professions are trying to develop new methods of tattoo removal**. But, we **currently do not have a method that will totally remove a tattoo**. And, common methods of tattoo removal are often painful and expensive.

➤ **Conclusion:**

➔ **You can be saved, even if you've dishonored God in your body?**

- **Rom 3:23** all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
- **Lk. 13:3, 5** everyone turning from sin to God, must repent and obey Jesus
  - this does not give you an excuse: can't tell yourself that you'll sin now and repent later
- **Phil. 3:12-14** we forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead, no matter the sins of our past
  - look to the future and glorify God, with whatever days we have remaining upon the earth
  - Whether you've sinned by dishonoring God with a tattooed and pierced body, or something else. You can be saved by obeying Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

➔ **4 principles to determine whether body piercing and tattooing is lawful:**

- We are to glorify God in our bodies.
- We are to only do things that are honorable and respectable in the sight of men.
- We shouldn't engage in lustful and licentious (sensual) behaviors.
- We shouldn't engage in questionable behaviors.

➔ **exhortation:**

- be sure that you glorify God in all that we do, sending the right message to others, never sending a licentious or lust message, so that you can help others get to heaven

➔ **Inv.:**

Audio sermon notes:

- ➤ denotes where to proceed to the next PowerPoint slide.
- All Scriptures are NASB, unless otherwise noted.
- Sermon recorded 3/26/2006, Church of Christ, South Livingston Ave. in Lutz, FL, Allan McNabb, BibleStudyGuide.org.